Indian Writers Series

J P Das

Poems



grassroots

J P (Jagannath Prasad) Das was born in 1936 and educated in the universities of Utkal and Allahabad. Among his collections of poems available in English translation are *First Person*, *Love is a Season*, *Timescapes*, *Silences*, *Diurnal Rites*, *The Unreal City* and *Lovelines.* He has six collections of stories in English translation including *The Pukka Sahib* and *Dear Jester.* His plays *Before the Sunset*, *Two Plays*, *The Underdog*, *Absurd Play* and *Sundardas* have been translated in English. Das is a well-known art historian and has published *Puri Paintings*, *Chitra-Pothi* and *Palm-leaf Miniatures.*

POEMS

A fine poet.

Keki N. Daruwalla

A poet of the unsaid . . . always reveling in understatement.

Suresh Kohli

The versatile and rich discourse of his poems make them eminently engaging for the reader.

G K Das

The world that Das creates is both magical and historical, lost and redeemed.

Mary O'Connor

(His) poems are packed with images from nature, life and the dream world. The romantic mood predominates, but the reader is always aware of a counter-thrust towards doubts and disillusion. There is no self-indulgent practicing here.

Nissim Ezekiel

His poetry is universal as true poetry should be and ranks with some of the best in any language.

Vassilis Vitsaxis

An unusual blending of the sense of beauty and the sense of joy in living and loving makes his poetry extremely readable and accessible. His passion for the diverse facets of life and existence makes his poetry vibrant and rejuvenating. The sense of rhythm that he tries to capture in his poetry is very close to the colloquial speech . . . If contemporary Oriya poetry has acquired a new dimension and sophistication in terms of vision, technical integrity and innovative use of the creative medium, it was because of Das's contribution.

Kavya Bharati

J P Das
POEMS

Translated from the Oriya
by the poet

Grassroots

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Contents

BEGINNING

In the blind alleys
of life,
chance meetings
are promises.

MASK

I keep many masks;
for day and night and evening too;
for a moment's mirth,
for the last act of a tragedy;
for guests and fellow-travellers,
one-time sweetheart and her spouse,
for emperors, soldiers, harlots, magicians,
for dead men and for processions;
for exiled sky and startled dawn,
for love and defence and deception.
In a wink I wear varied masks
of diverse guises
at every phase of my life.

I searched for a mask
which in its eyes' touch of blue
would bring all the virgins under my spell;
at the slightest twitch of my firm lips
enemies would admit defeat;
in one glance
all the birds in the sky
would wing into my cage;
I would summon night and sun would set.

That mask I could never get.
All my masks are of tiny surprises;
cheapest laughter, indifferent mirth;
sterile sulk, most feeble cry,

and impotent remorse.
My mask is of flimsy love
and of very trivial grief.

With that mask on
I entertain guests, chant mantras,
make love to my wife and my mistress;
at times I talk to the heavens
and look at the stars;
and get lost easily
among crowds of people.

My years grow from mask to mask,
from one deception to another.
Some try to know me
through my disguises,
some others knowing seem not to know.
If at times I feel
I have lost my credentials,
I try to see myself
and I look at the walls:
rows and rows of masks
and scattered glass pieces only.
No point in asking questions to the mirror.

SOME FACES

Some faces twinkle down on me
like morning stars.
Unasked, the sky sprinkles
some sympathy and compassion
like chill and dew.

Some other faces
puff up like coloured balloons
on my castoff bed,
and call me, make faces at me
teasing my lost manhood,
in sweltering lonely noontime.

Some faces scare me with varied masks
at the three-way junction
in quiet nights,
through the wind-howling casuarinas.

Some other faces
plain and pitiful
with vacant eyes
look into mine for shelter
and ask me which is the way
to go safely north.
Many more faces
with numberless eyes
stare at me
from the mirror-walls
of my magic house.
All sorts of faces –

some quite intimate
some quite unfamiliar;
known become unknown
in that crowd of faces.
I deliberately refuse
to recognize some faces;
at times I feel somewhat assured,
and happy; at times scared;
I smile a little.
Unconscious tears of my eyes
and exhausted nerves
make the faces hazy;
they disappear.
Experiences pass off;
faces fade away.
Only agony remains;
some rain, some road, some loneliness.

GODDESS

You appear in the vacant
moment of midnight,
you are the ordained goddess
of my secret yearnings,
of my blood and veins,
of my flesh and body.
Your throne is all my helpless wishes,
your temple-columns my defeated desires.
In the dreadful hour of nightmares,
you are installed.
In the forbidden city lanes
you are worshipped.
Your chants echo and re-echo
in auction cries of slave markets.

This is the last night of my waiting;
in the last act the hero is killed,
all your familiar lovers have fled.
No priest in the temple,
no waves in the ocean;
nothing is left of smiles and moonlight,
the temple arena is empty;
everything is quiet today;
tonight there is no one at all.
I wait for you and pace up and down
the portals of your presence, all alone;
look, I am your last samurai.

Let your conference with the dead end.

Come to my dreams
with your tinkling silver bells.
Let everything be extinct today;
let the temple be razed to dust.
Let the nights burn away in body's pyre.
Let darkness of sight,
sound, shape engulf everything.
Let your hands be octopus and crush me.
Let your feet be a pillory and clasp me.
Let the ten petals of my palms be gashed
by the cactus of your breasts.
Let your body be quicksand and devour me.

AT THE STROKE OF SIX

You made a promise
we'll meet at the stroke of six,
at six in the evening and none but us,
the two of us at the city limits,
the evening would be just for us
and time would stop sharp at six.

When you went to the sea-beach
with someone the other day
the sun set suddenly;
the mermaids got frightened;
castaway ships stalled in midocean;
the waters flamed like fire
and flowed blood red;
I was robbed of my time
and then on my sick-bed from dawn
to dusk and dusk to dawn,
in my fevered sleep,
there were no dreams
and no memories for me.

There will be evenings yet
and there will yet be you,
with the sunshine of
silent mornings in your breast,
your arms aching with midday's pain,
your body besieged with

the mysteries of darkest night,
your eyes twitching
to the excitement of traffic lights.
Would you look for me
on evenings like these,
with your hand on your breast,
cravingly on your dishevelled bed?

This evening,
there will be sacrifices yet;
battles and bloodshed;
a dagger in the lover's hand
a scream on the heroine's lips.
There will be death for this evening
and resurrection too;
some making up
and some suicide pacts,
on this anniversary of
the beginning and end of love.

You made a promise
we'll meet at six,
at the stroke of six
the two of us,
just we two in the lonely evening,
as if it were the last day of our lives
and there is to be no redemption tomorrow.

But look,
how hostile everything is!

The sky has turned crimson;
there is a strike in the city;
protests and processions,
there are prohibitory orders against us;
the city limits are oddly crowded today;
the clocks have all stopped at noon.

Only you and me here,
it's six in the evening;
only you and me
and the city's awe-struck populace.

LOOKING FOR MYSELF

Looking for myself
I know I'll meet you some day,
suddenly close to me.
Not much will be left of the night,
the imagined distance between
the need for you and your proximity
will be nonexistent,
all my search and endeavour
will end surprisingly.

Everything will be in a shambles,
with layers of dust and cobwebs,
the sky riveted to the walls,
the room littered with torn letters,
my legs tired, my hands inert,
with winter in my body,
and desert fire in my head,
warm blood staining the sheets,
my breathing feeble at the final hours.
But there will be you by my side,
incarnate in my whole being,
your body stretched out on my neutral bed.

There is hurricane in your every breath,
lightning in your every touch,
your mouth is a volcano
and each kiss its explosion,
each curve of the body

dreadful tides of the ocean,
your eyes flashing the revolt
of ejected meteors.
I will forget everything
and leave my house
without a forwarding address.
I will search for myself again
on the outskirts of the cremation grounds,
amidst penitent hermits
and in the desexed existence
of passionless celibates.

I'll go from one pilgrimage to another;
I'll be engrossed in the contemplation
of nabhi padma kundalini and brahma;
I'll renounce in the Triveni waters
the last props of my existence.

With rejected love letters in my hand,
shrivelled flowers
and a photograph of the dead,
I'll be looking for myself,
all alone on many a road,
the blood of the first sun
spilling on the tarmac,
the sky's cadaver lying
on the cremation ground,
rows of empty houses weeping
on both sides of the unending road,
the horizon silent and the winds riveted
to trees and dry branches.

In those weary last moments
I'll meet you again in such loneliness
while I deceive a little and comfort some
in my irate duality.

WAITING FOR YOU

Someone did tell me
that waiting was death,
but waiting for you –
mornings and evenings
get compressed to noon,
creating the illusion of a whole day;
yet it's really a colourless existence,
this fear of death and the wish to be
obliterated in sheer waiting.

The stone statues you see
in the museum of time –
you can tell them your secrets
in your own private tongue;
you may call them names
if you like
in anger or in fear;
you can burn them down
with your glance
or ignore them with a gesture;
you can lock your eyes in theirs;
you could even go close;
but the guide says, no,
they are not to be touched
you may only speak to them.

Words and words only.
Floods of language

and gales of patter.
Attempts to make contact
with alphabets.
Trying to share relationships
with vowels and consonants,
and to record confessions in codes.
But when it comes to the end,
beyond the exit door,
the speechless silence you meet
is only of renunciation.

Someone did tell me
waiting was death
but waiting for you
is a prolongation of living.
Or is it a misunderstanding?
Is it that you promised to come
another day, another time?
Or maybe you're waiting for me
eagerly in another city.
I'll read your letters again
and once again in your memory
I'll search for you in crowded streets.
I'll ask strangers about you
and of your wellbeing.
Though the knocks on the door
will be for my neighbours only,
I'll listen to each footfall
with needless anxiety.
They will be outsiders all
but in the hope of your reply I'll wait

though it will be other names
nagging my memory.

You did say life was love,
but waiting for you,
living itself is reason
enough for living;
life its own meaning and approval.
Life that is sometimes happiness
sometimes sorrow,
experienceless existence sometimes,
a restless sequence of happenings
where days are mere
inseparable mornings and evenings
where noon is a symbol
only of the passage of time.

Life is love you had said
but in the sequence of living
time's bare museum echoes
only flawed relationships.
So I'll keep on looking at the roads;
I'll search for your face in the crowds;
I'll read your letters again
and I'll wait eagerly in my own
private death wishes,
for someone did tell me
waiting was death and so
waiting for you.

TILL THE END

My strange existence this –
shuttling in space
and floating on the sea
from time immemorial;
suspended amidst the revolution
of moon sun planets and stars.
Sometimes I overtake
the onslaught of the waves
swimming upstream.
Sidestepping the meteors
sometimes I let myself
float with the milky way.
Screaming as I drown
I fly helpless sometimes
in the whirlwind.
At other times I sleep peaceful
on the floor of ocean or sky.

Your face shrinks in my hand sometimes
and looks helpless into my eyes.
At times your face expands
in a glitter of lights
and I get lost
in the pupils of your eyes.
We walk hand in hand sometimes,
I drag you to my bed;
I play with you a few moments
and then I sleep on your palm
for aeons on end.

There is a twinkle in your face
and the slice of smile grows –
it's now a crescendo of laughter.
In the wild winds
I fly about like a leaf
in that gale of laughter.
You glance at me for a moment
and I burn for years
in the smoldering fire of your eyes.
When your eyelids close
everything subsides;
time remains still
and I get lost in the body's night.

There are no oceans
no skies no storms
no rains no fires nothing.
All quiet peaceful calm and static.
Indifferent priests chant away hymns
in muted monotony
of unintelligible words.
I reminisce through the pages
of my abridged journals
recorded in three short chapters.

The black stallion gallops
across the diffused clouds.
The clip-clop of its trot drowns all else.
The rider laughs
and chunks of forest and sky
shake to the beat of his laughter.

Crowds gather with heads bowed
fear and disbelief in their mute eyes.
Dazed I look for the polestar
from side to side
in the twitching eyes of lightning.

What I supposed was
the colour of your sari
were only shattered clouds.
What I thought was
the vermilion mark on your head
was the setting sun.

So I touched my face my chest my eyes,
faithfully I read out the pages,
I signed on all the dotted lines,
I scanned all in a sidelong glance.
I took your name a hundred and eight times
and finally fixed my gaze on you.

All misgivings of the night materialized
to melt in the understanding
of the soft morning sunshine.
It's now unbounded peace
now only a long wait for me.

AFTER YOU LEAVE

This is our road's end.
It's time to take leave
to go our own ways
at this crossing.
Even before I could understand you
and fathom your body,
even before I could
share my secrets with you.

The road stretches far,
but at this crossroad
our relationship was cruelly aborted.
I was left behind on the platform
while your train steamed away
to some unknow city.
The moments we spent together
were exiled for good.
This road stretches far I know
but I have to get back
unless the road engulfs me completely.

Even after you leave,
the crossroad will remain neutral.
The generals will stay alert
on their stone mounts.
Silhouette birds will stay put
on the telegraph wires.
Windows will merely look up

at the tissue paper moon
to dream of a caesarian sunrise.
Lamp-posts will shiver
at the thought of impending gloom.
Then the palm of night will wipe off
the platform in a flash.

The whole room is engrossed
in the memory
of the unforgettable final moments.
Echoes are frozen in remembrance.
Window panes are all broken,
door curtains all drawn.
Only the shadow of your memory
flits about in my bare room.
The cold wind blows across the door
and nudges me hard.
The dead bird gets pale and cold
inside the bolted cage.

I resign myself.
Let the house burn down,
let it be auctioned out,
for though the house is mine today
tomorrow it belongs to none.
The telephone keeps ringing
and I let it ring on
involved as I am
in my many symbolic deaths.

It's midnight now,
there is none in the auditorium.
Only the clown is on the stage,
his head bowed in the last act.
The lonely bird beats its wings
against the ceiling of the godless temple.
The penitent with his severed head
lies prostrate on the cold pavement.

There is a queer kinship
between the end of life
and the transient but lovely flesh.
We'll therefore be sitting in a row
the penitent and the clown, hand in hand,
in search of immortality
at time's last frontiers.

The sari will flutter
and then will be seen no more;
the jingle of bangles will become faint.
Distance and darkness
will soon blot out your face.
When I remember you
from five hundred miles away,
your feet will stop for a moment
your thought disturbed a little
there will be some flutter
in remote hamlets
away from the stations.
Some birds will get lost in the storm,
some will dive into the grey pools of memory,

some will remain helpless on your lips
and in the slight quiver of your fingers.

I'll remember you effortless thus
and then I will have no fear
of death or immortality.

SIX HOURS

The six hours spent with you
were squeezed into the cyclop eye
of the train engine,
then vanished in the lonesome dark.

What fraction of time are six hours?
Can they be stretched?
Who can confine in a train compartment
compressed relationships?
For that matter,
how can darkness be nailed to the tree?
The wide island of angry clouds
awakened with a single call?
Or the intimate moon plucked out
from the blankets of winter mist?

The six hours will return
gathering themselves in a self-confidence
like escapeless echoes.
The six seasons will come back
from the death defying valleys of love
to the dream islands
on estuaries of fairy tales.
Where will you then go away
with the rains in your eyes?
I'll find you easily
in the ashes of dead stars.
I'll gather you from

the winter-tipped dew drops of memory.
I'll search you out
amid the weird vestiges of nightmares.
All the pathways of my search
would converge on the precipice of your body.
Wherever you choose to descend,
I'll be waiting for you there.

When the abstract darkness
gets busy talking to the dreams,
we'd take the last train
to the valley of the stars.

FLIGHT

In my flight
to the future,
if you trap me
in the memories
of our past,
from which
there is no escape,
who shall I pledge
my present to?

TRUTH

No other knowledge
is expedient here
except your casual passion,
which is a supreme truth.

No other precept
is relevant here,
except your active indifference,
which is
another supreme truth.

SEQUENCE

The morning calls up the noon
which blots out
the memory-laden words
from the depth of passion,
undressing dreams
in an accepted truth.

The noon calls up the evening,
where thoughts cease,
leaving only a grey sky
of limitless love
and an eternal dusk.

The evening calls up the night,
where isolated agonies
stretch empty moments to eternity,
turning love into
time made articulate.

OMENS

The compulsions of your smile
tire out the city
in grey loneliness.

In the chorus of your words,
shadows climb down the trees
and silence the murmur
of the leaves.

The cold touch of your hand
spirits away
the intimacy of dew drops
from the grass.

Your unseeing glance
burns down the dreams
of the horizon.

Your hesitation to be
yourself to me,
spreads some more wilderness
in my dark despairs
reflected in the skies.

NEVER LEAVE ME

Unwittingly you strayed
into my life;
but how can you
walk out of it now
leaving me all alone?

The map of my life
is a complex maze
of lost pathways;
how can you ever
find a way out of it?
Open any gate
and step out,
you will find me there
waiting for you.

It's not possible
to say goodbyes now.
In happiness and sorrow,
through certitude and doubt,
in intimacy and apathy,
you are my endless blessing
as I am your eternal curse.
Cherish no thoughts
of leaving me ever.
Stay by me and affirm
my longing for life.
Place on my hands,
that are forever begging,

a few spare moments
of your abundant life;
they will not satiate
my unceasing desire for you,
but they will keep me alive
as I wait for you
from one stressful moment
to another.

THIS MOMENT

What you are doing
this moment
in your country home,
all by yourself
in your room,
I try to imagine.

You are looking
out the window
watching the day
float effortlessly by
like an unmanned boat.
The restless noon
sails into the bubbles
of your wide-open eyes
and suddenly bursts.

You are surrounded
by relatives and friends,
leaning on the fullness
of the time gone by,
contentment in your eyes
showers grace on the grass
and plants and trees outside.
The indolent arc
of an untimely rainbow
falls at your feet
and breaks into pieces.

You put down
the half-read book;
you silence the words
seeking shelter on your lips;
you arrange your anxieties
in the stray tresses
falling on your forehead.
The radiant season
collapses on the floor,
wounded and bloody
all around you.

Your heartbeats resonate
in the flutter
of the little bird
hopping in the bushes.
Your delicate demurs
bring out colours
on the astonished petals
hiding behind the leaves.
You turn round
at a stranger's voice
and look at the wall;
you find it's only
the last silent sulk
of the setting sun
frozen in the mirror.

My many searching hands,
my million seeking eyes,
the relentless intensity

of my endless desires
merge into every atom
of your surroundings
and envelop all of you,
as you are sitting
this moment
all by yourself
in your country home
looking out the window
in complete unconcern
and devastating
with absolute ease
the delicate balance
of the entire universe.

PHOTOGRAPH

In my regular sequence
of looking at you
again and again,
I gaze upon your face,
but your eyes
do not look back at me;
they are in the skies
of some other time,
focused on constellations
of memories yet to be born.

Your image is frozen
in a quiet setting;
nothing moves around you.
There is no commotion
in the teacup in your hand,
but all my searches shatter
in the static
of your body's contours.

I look back at you
seeking answers
to my ignorant questions:
what anxiety is hidden
in the sparks of your hair?
What does the silence
of your eloquent eyes
seek to voice?
Who does it wait for,

the patient vermilion mark
on your forehead?
Who has gifted your lips
with the unopened morning
of radiant laughter?
What hide-and-seek games
does untimely sunshine
play on your cheeks?
What are these flowers
of indolent dreams
that adorn your sari?

Your picture-face
has no answers;
but my fate turns
in the playful drift
of colours on your face.

My wants come back to me
stumbling against
the undulating negations
of your body.
The teacup in your hand
stays poised under your lips,
but a storm assails me
like a primeval reproach
repeating its torment.

I dread looking back again
at the fullness of your figure
that time has passed by.

I take my mind off your face
and hide you in my breast
so that you cannot demand
instant answers to questions
you never even asked me.

MAHABHARAT

It is not possible
to live in exile
and don a disguise
for all times;
one has to return
to one's own land.

It is not possible
to remain neutral,
for here,
war is inevitable
and one has no choice
but to take a side.

Here, in the epic of life
all is written down:
for empire and power
the loaded dice of elections;
for the destitute,
a piece of land
as large as the tip of a needle
under the Land Reforms law;
lac-houses of harijan colonies,
war-zones of farms and factories;
the chakravyuha of poverty and want,
the unfailing brahmastras

in the the armoury of adversaries;
and the disrobed helplessness
of the lowliest and lost.

In diplomatic exchanges,
no principles are at stake.
The old and the venerable
beseech from the young
the inheritance of youth.
Honour is surrendered
in the fulfilment
of unjust promises.
There is assault and rape
in meeting halls.
Witnesses go blind.
Chastity is made divisible.
Licence and lust
are universally acknowledged.
Woman is mere womb here,
perfidy is routine
and might the only right.

In the dharmakshetra of everyday life,
the siren is veritably
the blow of the conchshell
that sounds the beginning of war.
The evening does not, alas,
bring its cessation;
it's only a respite

to regroup artifices
for the battle next day.
It is a war
bereft of all principles.
In this war,
to lose is the only sin.

KALAHANDI

Put away the road maps now.
To go there,
you do not need
helicopters any more;
wherever there is hunger,
there Kalahandi is.

The god of rain
turned away his face.
There was not one green leaf
left on the trees to eat.
The whole village a graveyard.
The ground cracked;
river sand dried up.
All the plans failed;
the poverty line
receded further.

Wherever you look,
there is a Kalahandi:
in the sunken eyes
of living skeletons,
in rags which do not
cover the frail bodies,
in the utensils
pawned off for food,

in the crumbling huts
with unthatched roofs,
in the exclusive prosperity
of having owned
two earthen pots.

Kalahandi is everywhere:
in the gathering of famished crowds
before charity kitchens,
in market places
where children are auctioned off,
in the sighs of young girls
sold to brothels,
in the silent procession
of helpless people
leaving their hearth and home.

Come, look at Kalahandi closer:
in the crocodile tears
of false press statements,
in the exaggerated statistics
of computer print-outs,
in the cheap sympathies
doled out at conferences,
and in the false assurances
presented by planners.

Kalahandi is very close to us:
in the occasional contrition

of our souls,
in the unexpected nagging of conscience,
in the rare repentance
of the inner self,
in the nightmares
appearing through sound sleep,
in disease, in hunger,
in helplessness,
in the abject fear
of an impending bloodshed.

How could we then walk
into the celebrated portals
of the twenty-first century,
leaving Kalahandi behind?

FEAR

Fear is the prehistoric darkness
lurking in the lanes
and by-lanes of the city
when you have fifty thousand rupees
in your briefcase.

Fear is the offspring
of King Kong
who emerges from childhood fables
and beats his chest
on the roof of the concrete jungle.

Fear is the ring of the telephone
hammering the heart
in the voice of the dreaded boss
at odd hours.

Fear is the telegram
at midnight
which arrives
inside a closed envelope
when the near and the dear ones
are far away.
In the still midday,
fear is the thumping in unison
of heavy boots

in times of curfew
in the lanes of impotent men.

Fear is the hushed whisper
of tense and uneasy days
when uniformed soldiers
armed with bayonets
charge into processions
after slogans of protest
have gone silent.

Fear is the roaring
of the motorbike
emerging from the temple
with a masked face
when names have been entered
in the hit list.

Fear is the witness
of your ignominious past
surfacing suddenly in the mind
back from banishment
looking for atonement
for the sins of the yesteryears.

Fear is the imminent
possibility of death,
leaping out of the mirror,
when vacant moments of time

draw wrinkles on the face
at the indulgent moments
before the dressing table.

Fear is the tenuousness
of relationship that hangs
from the everyday discordance
eternally afraid
of snapping itself.

KALINGA

The day gallops away
riding on horseback
over the dilapidated
rocks of Dhauli hills.
The invisible hands of Time
chronicle across the skies
the ironies of history.

Layers of legend
lie strewn across the landscape.
The fading rock-edicts
keep repeating the arrogance
of a doubtful victory.
The ancient red earth
connects one age with another.

As the echo of the last conch shell
is drowned in the wind,
the peak of the hill
puts an end
to the strategies of devastation.
The tiny flower in the shrub
lifts its head
like a veritable victor.

The silent waters of the river Daya
flow like blood.
The trees, mute witnesses,
point to the east
with their new branches.

No one wins,
no one loses.
At the break of the dawn,
weary warriors move on
to the humdrum battlefield
of their daily grind.

Leaving Kalinga behind,
wrapped in a legend,
wearing a monk's habit,
Ashoka walks towards
his own nirvana.

WOMAN

With her long dark hair
she knitted sweaters
for each one of her kin.

She fed everyone
of her family
from her own share,
going hungry herself.

She surrendered her face
and bosom to bear the assaults
of cruel hands and sharp nails.

She gave away
each limb of her body
to prop up her fragile home.

And said at last,
apologizing profusely,
that she was sorry
she had nothing more to offer.

MY WORLD

My small world
lies suspended between
the four walls of your house.
There is a no entry sign,
yet my life, leashed to it,
keeps moving endless
round and round.

From wherever I start
I reach your house,
sure as death,
as though all roads lead
to this single destination.

It's easy to find it –
on the front lawn
winter sleeps at noon
as the spotless day
dries in the sun
like your cast-off sari.
Your pet clouds lounge
high up on the roof.
In the night,
the house is snow-clad
in mysteries.
Moonlight peeps out

through the open window,
and I know
when the other window opens,
there will be sunshine.

From my look-out
I fix my eyes on the house
and invoke you
in the ultimate measure
of my meditation.
My prayers stop at the edges
of your unmade bed,
wet memories overflow my senses;
a taste of the sea assails me;
my conscious becomes a dream
and loses all its reason.

I see blazing heaps of sand,
and your body seething
in the sultry summer heat,
I see a storm gather
and pass over the desert,
and then I see
your dishevelled sari
lying forlorn
along your undulated shores.

I see you through my many
states and aberrations –

you are the sum total
of my entire life,
its beginning, middle and end;
the three measures of time
and the four directions;
the five elements, the six seasons,
and the seven heavens;
the ten misfortunes
and the fourteen worlds.

Your house is all I have,
movable or immovable,
and I know I am destined,
like an accursed soul,
to circle it round and round
now and for ever.

SANCTUARY

I have no home;
I have no address.
My life is a continuous
search for refuge
in your remote continent,
where my wanderings
have torn my existence
to discrete pieces
and scattered them
among the many paradoxes
of my growing up.

Sheltered in your tresses
I have seen the night nestling there
charging with its myriad stars
the dense gloom of despair.

Hiding behind your eyes
I have seen dreams float by
towards the shores of fulfilment
consoling along the way
the wild waves of discontent.

Perched on your lucid lips
I have listened to
chants of Vedic hymns

intoned with effortless ease
bringing dead alphabets to life.

From the formidable forts
of your resolute breasts
I have seen the ironies of history
bring blossoms of promise
to the wastelands of time.

On the fertile shores
of your earnest thighs
I have seen primeval galaxies
in their progenitive pride
projecting complete constellations
into the firmament of the future.

Prostrate at your feet
I have seen the century
devastated by the anguish
of its previous birth
and its atomic fragments
pouring out of the navel
of the penitent past
and seeking nirvana
in the pores of your body.

AT THE TRAFFIC LIGHTS

The car moves on
smooth and well-regulated
in its mechanical perfection.
But when the traffic light
glares with its red eye,
the dream jerks to a halt;
the engine growls
with irritation.
The impatient car behind
keeps on honking
as if it wants to make it
into the next century
beyond the crossing.
Waiting behind the wheel
the bored eyes
seek out comic relief
in the bizarre sculpture
of the accident-prone car
and its chauffeur's monkey-face.
One tries to read
the headlines of the tabloid
held out at the car door,
but there is nothing
sensational there
except the face of the newsboy.

Suddenly there advances
into the rear-view mirror
a skeleton with a dead child
in its bony hands;
its screaming fingers
pierce the steel
and wipe off the daydream.
It shatters the easy equipoise,
it takes you,
in a moment,
to the perilous precipice
of your conscience
making you, all of a sudden,
think of fate and God,
and brings to your lips
lines of a forgotten prayer.

The traffic light lowers
its benevolent eyes.
The car anxiously jumps forward
wishing to get lost
in the traffic rush.
But the image
of the skeleton
refuses to leave
the rear view mirror
until the next crossing.

POETRY

People often ask about
the meaning of poetry –
even they who won't touch
poetry with a bargepole.
But then no one bothers to ask
about the meaning of Time
or the definition of Love,
or about the purport of Life.

It's for sure, as someone said,
that no one reads poetry –
neither fishmonger nor chief minister,
neither publisher nor professor.
It's also well-known
that these people are totally
unconcerned about
the rainbow and the butterfly,
about the patter of rain
and the smell of earth.

It is equally well-known
that poetry does not bring revolution.
It does not give bread to the hungry.
It cannot stop police bullets.
Poetry does not even
give a lesson in morality.

If that had been the poet's aim,
he would have taken to the streets
a gun, not a pen, in his hand.
He would have raised battle-cries
and instead of writing poems
he would have coined slogans
and formulated morals.

Even they who read books
usually keep away from poetry.
However, there still are
some moon-struck people
who do read poetry.
They read a poem and create it too
along with the poet,
and breathe life into it.

A poem is only for him
who, without understanding it
in a first reading,
bravely gives it a second try.

The meaning of a poem
is only that much
which, through doubts and incomprehension,
crosses the frontiers of the eyes
and enters the innermost recesses
of the reader's mind.
The poem's reason for being

is only that which one understands
through its ambiguity and obscurity
and nothing more.

A poem is somewhat like love
or like time, if you please,
it's fulfilled in itself.
A poem demands nothing,
it does not aspire for anything.
It is its own trial and realization;
its own content and expanse;
its own relevance and justification.
The poet, himself self-created,
creates its meaning
and also its obscurity.

A poem happens
beyond figures of speech,
beyond simile and metaphor.
A poem is above grammar and spelling
and punctuation marks.
It is free from the tyranny
of professors, critics,
theorists and interpreters.
A poem exists in its own sovereign land,
itself its lord and master.

No one reads poetry,
not even she

for whom the poem was written.
One might then say
that poetry is of no consequence
and has no relevance to life.
That's true.
But then,
come to think of it,
what is life itself
but a few obscure lines
of some stray poem?

DEVI

Your whereabouts
are unknown to me;
you are far away
is all I know.
You are like
the Supreme Being,
you are everyone's;
mine alone
you will never be.

You are the ordained goddess.
In the fragrance
of incense and camphor,
you are the luminescence
of offerings and prayer;
in the rising crescendo
of sacred hymns,
you are the divine joy
of deliverance.
For the penitent
prostrate at your feet
you are the precious boon
bouncing off your
many flashing weapons;
for the ardent acolyte
who has never set eyes on you,

you are the bond between
this and the other world.

You are the letter box
and the dead letter office;
you are all the letters
written for you
and their torn drafts;
you are the wrong addresses
where the letters cannot reach.

In the close confines
of domestic happiness
in the living room,
with relatives and pet dog,
you are the family's tradition
and also a wild exception
to its suffocating mores.

You are the deathly discomfort
of disturbing words
tormenting the innermost mind;
you are the pointed meanings
of an abstruse poem;
you are the life-giving balm
of the prayers which hurt;
you are the unique irony
of the many sufferings
not spoken of in the poems

written in your honour.

You are the benediction
of a displeased goddess;
you are the wrong address
on an unwritten letter;
you are the intimacy
of an empty house;
you are the simple meaning
difficult to grasp.

How can I find you –
in which house, which temple,
which post office,
what book of poems,
within what limits
of how many worlds?
And on whose dreams
shall I trespass
to ever find you?

TOURIST

My first morning
in your city.
I wake up and look
for you by my side,
though I know
it is many years
since you are gone.

I go out in search
of the memories
you left behind.
I walk the streets
your feet once trod.
I look at the houses
on either side;
they are still disturbed
for one day
you overwhelmed them
with your casual glance.

I enter the park
even now heavy with blossoms
where your gracious fingers
touched its trees.
I look at the sky
which remembers you still.

I find the clouds
in a grand design,
the way you arranged them.

In the shelves of stores
where you shopped
I find vacant spaces
you left behind.
When voices assail me
in the market place,
they have the arrogance
of having touched your lips.

Wherever your feet fell
is now a tourist site.
When the blind alley,
illuminated by your
one time presence,
beckons me,
I seek refuge there,
in the snugness of the wall
on which you once leaned.
The warmth of your breath
hovering in the air
will redeem me
from my imperfections;
I will take in
through all my senses
the essence of your being

blended into the elements
of your city.

You are everywhere
in the entire city,
enchanting its earth and sky.
The flowers of the park
echo your spontaneous laughter.
All silences reverberate
with the strains of your voice.
The temple sculptures
carry your delicate contours.

Your handwriting is etched
in museum inscriptions.
Every ordinary house here
is a grand monument,
and history is emblazoned
in each everyday event.

You lived here once;
so there is in this city
no discontent,
no ugliness, no disorder.
Every open door welcomes,
every stranger oozes warmth;
every outstretched hand
seeks friendship.

When I take leave
of your city,
I'll look at the crowds
in the fading light of dusk
and see the people
as you knew them once,
their charmed faces
flush with a tenderness
of the happiest memories
gifted to them by time.

RIOT

The gods took their stance
facing each other,
with their armies in tow,
on the innocent street.

Intolerance became a weapon;
anger fortified the hands,
hatred prodded on the legs,
fundamentalism obliterated
the simple logic of conscience.

And then,
a reign of beastly terror;
sacrament of blood,
offering of slain heads,
incense of burning houses
and the congregational prayer
of painful shrieks.

When curfew was clamped,
gods went back their way
to their ordained heavens.
Ambulances carried away
to the hospital
the wounded and the dying.

Police vans took the corpses
to the city morgues.
Wails and siren sounds
got lost in the smell
of burning houses and gunpowder.

No one noticed
the corpse lying in the drain.
He had come to the street
begging for alms.
No one knew his name
or his religion.
Now, he is beyond
all sacred texts and faiths.
It is only his dead eyes
which still keep staring
fixed and merciless
at the remorseless heaven
darkened by the black smoke
of a forlorn future.

CURFEW IN THE CITY

With nostalgia in my heart
and longing in my eyes,
I dream of my city.
I cross the river of my innocence
and take the road to my childhood;
I stop at the crossroads of growing up
and make my way
to the city of my happy memories.

Addresses written in familiar hands
show me the way,
friendly faces beckon me;
fragments of memories
nudge me on.
And, there, suddenly before me
is the city of my dreams.

But everything seems strange
in the city I knew so well.
Everything seems to be in ruins;
the roads deserted,
the houses dejected and forlorn.
There is no warmth
in the crowd of posters;
no invitation in the peeling walls.
I come face to face

with the harsh ironies
lying in wait for me.

Unwanted sights crowd around me:
friendly knocks rebuffed
on the neighbour's door;
thirst returning from the dry tap;
childhood crying on its way
to an orphan future;
modesty hiding her tears in shame;
innocence caught between flying bullets;
amity falling down in pieces
from the broken domes.

The day retreats in disgrace;
night comes weeping
in the completeness of its shame.
Bewildered, I look at faith
stuck on the knife's edge,
dharma blasted in explosions,
conscience drowned in blood,
and justice burnt down in arson.

I have a dream in my eyes,
there is a city in my dreams,
and, there is a curfew in the city.

ARCHAEOLOGY

History by his side,
the rsearcher stands
upon the arid expanse of time
rummaging through ruins
for signs from the past:
temple crests hidden under sand,
flowers fallen from idol's hands,
expeditions ordered in dreams,
snakes guarding the sleeping boy,
hoof prints of galloping horses,
jingling anklets stilled in the river,
signet rings in the fish's belly,
mementos to identify strangers.

He looks around,
his mind beset with questions –
when where why whose,
coronation, reign, war, ashvamedha,
proclamations, bequests, genealogy.
No one answers.
There are no clues.
The questions run about
from place to place
in the barren expanses
like deserters fleeing battle fields.

When he repeats the questions,
a hideous laughter
from the thirsting souls
of commoners
comes out from the caves
and the coves
and from the recesses
of the horizon
knocking against stones,
trees and the void.

Its wandering echo now orders
the sky to turn its face,
the mountain to go to sleep,
the forest to close its eyes,
and tells History,
Shut up, liar!

SAVAGES

In broad daylight
the sun was stabbed to death.
The assailants
chopped it into slices
and threw them into the dark
of the filthy drain.
Beasts took over the city.
With its million nails and fangs
storm came down
and ravaged the earth.
Vultures pecked to pieces
the corpse of the day.

Wild fires swept the city
from one end to the other.
Birds were thrown out
of their nests
like sparks of fire.
The innocent, helpless animals
remained trapped
inside the circle of fire.
The shocking news
of yet another hundred deaths
got lost within
the routine newspaper headlines.

Scared alphabets took shelter
behind blood soaked posters.
History blew itself away
like charred bits of paper.

The sound of bullets came
bursting like thunder.
The sky was torn apart.
Celebration of life on earth
turned into heaps of ashes.
The prehistoric beasts
marched forward
from one street to another
over the bosom
of the burning city.

BUSTEE

They all come here, finally
unasked, time and again.

To this nameless slum
History comes with its
invading hordes.
Passing through archways,
flying flags of triumph,
marking its conquest
with victory columns.
History demands surrender,
asks for blood and sacrifice-
warrior's blood, rebel's blood,
innocent's blood, toiler's blood.
History asks for submission,
acceptance, subjugation and loyalty.
History holds out
the threat of Emergency.

Civilisation comes here
hiding behind mask,
gun and Bible in hand,
setting up colonies,
investing money,
ushering in industrial revolutions,
bellowing factory smoke,

establishing townships,
lecturing in townhalls.
Civilisation sells yellow journals,
counterfeit goods, moonshine,
and pornography.
Civilisation doles out
drugs and venereal disease.
Civilisation demands
addiction, blind following
and obedience.

Democracy arrives
in the bustling street
beyond the poverty line,
riding jeeps
and waving flags.
Democracy demands
signatures, thumb impressions,
bribes, lies, applause,
taxes, donation, votes,
witnesses, supporters, goondas,
garlands, posters, hired crowds,
slogans, processions, platforms,
microphones, meetings, rallies,
mass movements, effigies.

To the quiet, scared, innocent street
religion takes strides amidst
hymns, prayers and carols,

in the calls of purohit and muezzin,
wearing beard, turban and cap,
decked in vermilion and saffron,
shouting hoarsely to the glory
of the one and only God.
Religion comes with knives and sticks,
grenades and flaming torch in hand,
asking for destruction
of temple and mosque.
Religion calls for rape, arson and loot,
kafir's head, heathen's entrails.
Religion snatches away
bangles from the hands of married women,
parents from their children
honour of girls and
the potful of rice boiling on the hearth.

They come and go away
threatening to strike again.
Newspapers change headlines.
In the political horse-trading
power is auctioned away,
through elections, prayers,
riots, curfews, lectures, statements,
five-year plans, false promises,
the bustee survives them all,
like a small child
newly orphaned
playing at the street corner

still unaffected
by religion, democracy,
civilization and history.

GANDHI

The experiments with truth
turned into slogans.
The philosophy of life
remained stuck
to the blind eyes of statues.
Success remained confined
to mere definitions.
The soul was taken over
by the gross merchandise
of opportunism.

For the establishment of dharma
war was declared.
For maintaining peace
bustees of dalits were burnt.
With the support
of devious scriptures
truth was asked
to prove itself.
The men of god
were made outcastes.
The lowliest of low
moved even further down.
There is no one now
to search for truth;
no one is bothered

about the means any more.
Everyone has his eye
on counterfeit results.
In the profit and loss
of black markets
the last capital of goodness
was squandered away.
Imperialists marched on
in search of new colonies.
Awards for peace
were bestowed on war-mongers.

The old pocket watch
cannot keep track
of the lines of poverty.
The horrors of truth
cannot be seen through
the thick pair of glasses.
The small piece of loin cloth
cannot hide the vulgarity
of limitless power.
The walking stick cannot stop
the aggressive violence
of extremists.

When the clocks fall silent
and their hands move no more,
when history takes leave,
he would come out yet again

from the confines of statues,
movies and anniversaries
and take another long stride
towards the raised guns
of a new breed of assassins.

HISTORICAL TRUTH

History is nothing
but a piece of rant;
there is no such thing
as a historical truth.
Might owns right
as also history.
You engrave someone's name
on a stone slab
and he is the rightful owner
till the letters are erased.

History is a fossil
of primeval time,
its elements made out
of broken swords,
crumbling skulls,
shattered idols,
undeciphered alphabets
and scraps of paper strewn
across the archives floor.
And all these shuffled
and made to serve
any which way you like.

History can be picked up
from the ground

like a coveted crown
with the tip of the sword.
History can be auctioned
and given away
to the highest bidder.
History can be consigned
to the blazing flames
like a flimsy effigy
by a frenzied mob.
The purohit can proffer it
into sacrificial fire.
History may get lost
in the labyrinths
of conflicting interests.

There is no such thing
as the final truth
of history.
Like a quickchange artist
it changes its
colour and countenance.
Anything can be proven
and established
by false evidence,
fake records,
cryptic signs and symbols.
A stone statue can be proven
to be a figure of straw.
A mosque to be a temple,

a temple a stupa;
a hero a jester and villain.

History has no truth to it,
it has no form of its own.
When you take away
from its face
layer after layer
of falsehoods,
you will only discover
that there is yet
another mask behind it.

THIS DAY

I dedicate this day to you,
for in my morning dream
you appeared for a moment
and as soon vanished.

There will be no other news
in today's papers;
only your face will peep out
from every column
on every page.

Today,
only your calls will come;
the letters
the postman brings
will only be yours.
You'll get down
from every taxi
that stops by my gate;
every knock on my door
will be from your knuckles.

If the world ends today
and mankind perishes,
and only a few dreams of man
are left behind,

I know for sure
that you will appear
vivid and vibrant,
in those remaining dreams.

POKHRAN

It is not easy
to find the place.
To reach Pokhran
you have to make sacrifices.
You have to leave behind
your human values
and reasons of living.
The road to Pokhran
is built on
history's wasteland
of hunger, suffering
and deprivation.

On the way of Pokhran
there will be Kargil;
if you walk on
towards a blind future,
Hiroshima is not
far beyond Pokhran.

Pokhran is the burning cavern
of Krishna's mouth
in his world-image,
where killer Times rules.
There is no possibility
of any life form
in its poisonous environs,

and here
extinction is the norm.

The ruthless lustre
of blinding effulgence
plucks away vision
from the eyes.
In the explosion
of a million suns
the creation becomes dark.

Life ceases beyond
dead waveless seas
and flaming skies.
From the remains
of smoke and ashes
kalki comes
wrapped in devilish laughter
riding the dark horse
of devastation.

The poor ordinary man
out for his livelihood
stands stunned
before the carnival
of blazing lights,
and at the end
of the unreal day
returns to the starving dark
of his tumbledown hut.

THE DAFFODIL

Neither the teacher
in the classroom
nor his confounded pupil,
nor the westward-looking scholar
has ever seen it with his mortal eyes;
yet the daffodil,
fluttering and dancing
in the breeze
in its golden arrogance,
flashes upon their inward eye.

The empire may have perished
like a short spring,
but the daffodil lives on.
The empire may have dried up
like the rain
or as the pearls of dew,
but the daffodil lives on
tossing its head
in a sprightly dance.

As lively and fresh now
as in the golden age of imperialism,
its glory remains untarnished
in the ruins of the empire.
In the emptiness of lands

ravaged by cultural invasions,
the daffodil shines and twinkles
like an eternal star.

Through the open windows of the mind
winds of subculture
from upstart foreign lands
rush in and blow us off our feet.
The daffodil shines as ever before
in its shameless arrogance
in the inward eyes
of our very own intellectuals.

NO ISLANDS

A leaf falls
and there is turmoil
in the outer space.
The line on your palm
moves a fraction
and stars and planets
change their course.

The gentle quiver
of the rolling waves
in a faraway sea
caresses the wings
of Siberian birds
on their long flight
to warmer lakes.

Blessings from the lips
of farseeing prophets,
from across light years,
brighten up the future
of children yet to be born.

Bullets flying in Sarajevo
cross countries and continents
to hit the unknown man
walking the peace march
in a distant land.

Unremitting hunger
of Somalia and Kalahandi
shows up on dining tables
of air-conditioned homes
in affluent cities.

Virus from cast off cadavers
threatens the complacence
of the bluest blood.
Sighs of the third world
turn into nightmares
and disturb the slumber
of metropolises of the world.

There are no islands.
The whole mankind stands
hand in hand
in an unbroken chain
awestruck at the anguish
of the weakest
and the lowliest man.

AFTER GUJARAT

After Gujarat,
will there be poetry?
Was it possible
to write poetry
after Alexandria was burnt down?
After Auschwitz,
after Hiroshima and Vietnam,
after the Emergency
and Babri masjid,
after 9/11 and Iraq?

It's not possible
to banish poetry.
Poetry comes back effortless
to Plato's republic,
to Stalin's Siberia,
to Pokhran and Kalahandi.
Poetry follows
the footprints of violence
as it chronicles
the descent of man.
Like history
poetry has no end.

Poetry is written
despite fatwa and bans.
Poetry laughs at Gulag,
ignores the censor's blue pencil

and the fundamentalist's frown.
Poetry is written
against the backdrop
of bonfire of books.

After Gujarat
there will be poetry
about Gujarat itself.
It will begin
with the shame of Ayodhya,
and track the bloody trail
to Godhra to Gujarat,
on to Mumbai.

When Babri rises again,
poetry will affirm
that temples are built
not with blood-scribed bricks
and stones carved with hatred,
temples are built,
like poetry,
with imagination and faith
in the hearts of men.

After Gujarat,
poems will be written
to affirm the truth
that there is no Ayodhya
outside of the poet's
epic imagination.

END

We left laughter behind
somewhere on the way.

The meteor changed its course;
eyes stayed fixed on the mid-ocean.

The forest receded;
the lone tree stretched
its hand towards the sky.

Islands remained unknown;
the wind blew away the dreams.

The battleground is quiet now;
there are no tears.

Nonsense Verses

TRANSLATION

Line to line, going by the books
He must rhyme it by hooks or crooks.
What results is rather odd
It's neither monkey nor god,
A god-faced monkey is how it looks.

AIRWORTHIES

The cormorant drowned in a shallow gorge;
The pigeon did fly to his home, by George.
The kingfisher dove into the jaws of a shark
What a sad face has this poor little lark!
The owl missed the signs on the Athens road;
The albatross was crushed under a wearisome load.
The woodpecker was barred from going into the woods
The mynah is in one of its mournful moods.
The ostrich groans with a colic pain
The parrot has to learn its lessons again.
The petrel has lost its way to the sea
The oriole was honoured with an O.B.E.

DEFECTION

The crafty legislator caught in the defection game
Left Party B and member of Party A became
Not being made a minister
He imagined intrigues sinister
And said: ABCD – they are all one and the same.

BETTER THAN BEST

Whose is the hoarsest call?
Answered the doggie: bho bho.
Which tobacco is best of all?
The jackal said: hookah ho.

Which would be sweetest note?
The frog croaked: katar kay;
Which month is stifling hot?
The goat said: May, May!

HINDI CLASS

The creatures learning Hindi
Kicked up quite a shindy.
From amidst all the brouhaha
The jackal asked: kya hua?
Joining the abysmal howl
Han han hoon, said the owl.
Not to be left out at that
Main aoon? said the cat.

THE MONKEY AND THE OWL

A funny pair – the monkey and the owl
Lived on a tree branch cheek by jowl.
Quarrelled one day and sulking
Spent a whole week without talking
Scowls on their faces – what a howl!

THE CROSSING

Tiger, boatman, betel leaves, goat
Have to cross the river on a boat.
Only two at a time the boat can take;
To carry all four how many trips will it make?

The goat ate the betel leaves
The boatman ate the goat
The tiger ate the boatman
And got up the boat.
And thus that all the four to take
It had just a single trip to make.

NIGHT IN THE DAKBUNGALOW

As soon as I had put out the light,
I saw a million mosquitoes alight.
They sure would have flown me to space,
But by good luck I was held in place
By a billion bedbugs who gripped me tight.

COCK AND BULL

They kept teaching him kukudu-koon,
But he only said cock-a-doodle-do.
Cocky Mr. Cock,
(You laughing stock)
You push your luck,
Tandoori is out and you are stew.

SANSKRIT TEST

In the class for the Sanskrit test
were cows, buffaloes and the rest.
Bhoh, bhoh said the dog to the teacher,
And only *he* passed, the clever creature.

VILLAINS

The frog keeps croaking,
It gets hoarser;
The elephant takes
A spin in his roadster.
The owl's uncle
And the monkey's niece
Are verily the villains
Of the piece.

BHAGIRATHI BHAINA

He, of Bhimkhol, Bhagirathi Bhaina
Made up his mind to go to China.
A visa he couldn't get
But by the travel bug beset
Went to the zoo instead
to look at the hyena.

SADANAND SATPATHY

He, of Sarankul, Babu Sadanand Satpathy
Went off riding his brand new phatphati
The red traffic light
He crossed with delight
And thus did the babu attain sadgati.

FEAR

The goat is terrified of the tiger
The tiger is frightened of the figer
The figer is fearful of the goat –
They are all in the very same boat.

IKE, NEVER

I like Ryan, Meg,
I like a chicken leg,
But what I really like
Is a proper Patiala peg.

DOGGEREL

The lapdog said, bow-wow.
His sahib said, now now!
The pidog said, bhoh bhoh.
His babu said, oh, ho!

PROF. PAL D.

The haughty Prof. Pal D.
Wanted everything jaldi;
Ever in despair
He'd tear his hair
In no time became a baldy.

THREET

The horrible creature threet
Poor twoot he'd browbeat;
But seeing fourt
Come to court
He'd shrink and retreat.

GET REAL

For me prose is fine
Even poetry I don't mind,
But what I'd really love
Is to have some wine.

LAUGHING STOCK

If you think the camel
Is a comical mammal
At which you can laugh,
What about the yak
And the aardvark
And, above all, the giraffe?

The world that Das creates is both magical and historical, lost and redeemed.
Mary O'Connor

His poetry is universal as true poetry should be and ranks with some of the best in any language.
Vassilis Vitsaxis











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